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Carol X Weakley 12/07/2006 04:11:22 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8016
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2056

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2016
TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [SP](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL'S OPPOSITION TO SPAIN'S MIDDLE EAST PLAN
(C-RE6-01224)

REF: STATE 190559

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones; Reasons 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY/COMMENT: Israel is strongly opposed to the Middle East peace initiative proposed by Spanish PM Zapatero. Israeli FM Livni bluntly informed Moratinos of this position on November 16 and urged him to put the initiative aside or at least to discuss it with the GOI before proceeding further. The Israeli MFA does not believe that the Spanish initiative will win consensus support in the EU, a view they claim is shared by EU HighRep Solana. The Spanish Embassy in Tel Aviv acknowledged that they are "not making any progress" on the plan at present, but added that Madrid may raise it again at the European Council meeting on December 14-15. Israel's reaction to the Spanish plan demonstrates anew the GOI's opposition to any independent EU role in resolving the Middle East conflict. END SUMMARY/COMMENT.

GOI Rejects Spanish Middle East Plan

¶2. (C) According to the MFA and the EU mission in Tel Aviv, HighRep Solana raised the idea of another Madrid-type conference to reinvigorate peace talks during his October 25-27 visit, but encountered "no interest" on the Israeli side. PM Zapatero's announcement of the plan on November 16 elicited an immediate and sharp response from FM Livni. One of Livni's staffers who monitored her telephone call with Moratinos called it a "very difficult conversation." Livni reportedly chastised the Spanish FM for failing to consult with Israel, commenting that such a move "is not acceptable behavior among friends." She urged Moratinos to put the Zapatero initiative aside unless it could be agreed to by the involved parties. Another of Livni's staffers, who accompanied her to the Euro-Med ministerial in Tampere on

November 28, said that Moratinos approached Livni at one of the meetings and asked "are you still angry with me?"

Israelis Do Not Believe Spanish Initiative Has EU Support

13. (C) Livni's staff does not believe that the Spanish have sufficient support within the EU to force the issue. This view was reinforced by Livni's meetings with German FM Steinmeier and EU HighRep Solana on December 3. The German Embassy admitted that Steinmeier and PM Olmert had agreed "the initiative is not worth pursuing," while an EU official told us that Solana said the Spanish plan "is not on the table right now." The Spanish Embassy acknowledged that they are "not making any progress" on the initiative at present, but suggested that Madrid may raise it again at the European Council meeting on December 14-15. Livni plans to continue her campaign against the plan when she travels to Paris on December 5.

GOI Still Opposed to Significant EU Role

14. (C) Comment: PM Olmert has told visiting Codels that he is encouraged by Germany's engagement in the Middle East under Chancellor Merkel; the Israelis also recognize that UNSC permanent members like the U.K. and (to a lesser extent) France will be involved in the region. However, Israelis believe that many EU states, including Spain, are biased in favor of the Palestinians. Accordingly, the GOI remains averse to any substantial EU role in resolving the Middle East conflict, preferring to negotiate directly with the Palestinians or -- when pressed -- through the USG. The GOI does not consider Spain -- nor its "loose cannon" FM Moratinos -- to have significant influence in the region and seriously doubts that Madrid understands Israel's security needs. Strong Israeli-EU trade ties, participation by the EU in the Quartet, and the EU-Border Assistance Mission in Rafah have not altered these views, nor has the EU demonstrated that it has other leverage sufficient to win GOI support for a more active European role. End comment.

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JONES